SUMMARY OF STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

GDOT Truck Lane Needs Identification Study – October 16, 2007
Capital Education Center – Atlanta, Georgia

The fifth Statewide Advisory Committee Meeting for the GDOT Truck Lane Needs Identification Study was held at the Capitol Education Center on October 16, 2007 beginning at approximately 1:05 PM. Michelle Caldwell, GDOT Project Manager, welcomed the group and thanked them for coming. She turned the floor over to Andrew Smith, Consultant Project Manager for HNTB. The following individuals attended the meeting:

Name	Company	Phone	E-Mail
Crystal Daniels	ACCG	404-522-5022	cdaniels@accg.org
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Tom McQueen	GDOT		tom.mcqueen@dot.state.ga.us
Michelle Caldwell	GDOT		michelle.caldwell@dot.state.ga.us
Darryl VanMeter	GDOT		
Stacey Pittman	GDOT		
Jabari Parker	GDOT	404-651-5329	
Ed Crowell	GMTA		
Andrew Smith	HNTB	404-946-5708	asmith@hntb.com
Claudia Bilotto	HNTB		
Marc Cutler	Cambridge Systematics		
Dike Ahanotu	Cambridge Systematics		

Project Video/Introduction

Mr. Smith began by sharing the project video, including a 3-D animation of a truck lane, to help paint the picture of the expected freight increases in Georgia over the next 30 years. After the video, Mr. Smith began a presentation outlining the purpose, findings, and recommendations of the truck lanes study.

Segment Level Analysis

Mr. Smith reviewed the study's Phase I Recommendations and explained the evaluation criteria applied to each of the segments selected for further study. These include Safety and Security, Congestion and Mobility, Benefits and Costs, Economic Development Initiatives, Environmental, and Constructability. He shared findings related to Safety and Security as well as PM Peak Volumes in the truck lanes in 2035.

Patrick Vu, State Road and Tollway Authority, asked if the corridor volumes illustrated a build versus a no build scenario. Mr. Smith explained that the volumes illustrate total corridor volume in 2035 without truck lanes as compared to the total volume of the corridor including the truck lanes, with two assumed in each direction.

Mr. Smith presented the PM Peak travel speeds and explained that the increases (equating to travel time savings) in some corridors are significant, though truck lanes are not a silver bullet for congestion in all areas.

Darryl VanMeter, GDOT Urban Design, asked if all trucks are utilizing the truck lanes. Mr. Smith responded that the system is voluntary use, so the number of trucks in the lane represents the true demand. The percentage of trucks typically using the truck only lane varies by location and time of day but is as much as 60% of truck traffic in some cases.

Mr. Vu asked if the two lanes in each direction were evaluated as two mixed general purpose lanes. Mr. Smith responded that they were not; we only evaluated them as truck lanes, though earlier results indicated that the benefit isn't as significant for trucks in that situation.

Mr. Smith continued with the presentation, sharing benefit-cost ratios, constructability ratings, and the environmental assessment. Each of these factors was considered in the identification of corridors for further analysis as a part of four truck only lane systems developed for the Atlanta region. He explained that despite scoring lower than some of the other selected segments, I-675 was included in a portion of the system analysis because it has a lot of available right of way and therefore offers some cost savings relevant for consideration in the analysis.

System Analysis

Mr. Smith presented the four system alternatives and described the logical termini and access points identified for each. Marc Cutler, Cambridge Systematics, then presented the system analysis results, including corridor volumes, speeds, and benefit-cost ratios. Mr. Cutler explained that the truck lanes attract demand from other arterials in the corridor and that the lanes accomplish a lot by doing this and keeping up speeds. He continued that there are two ways of looking at the B/C ratios. You can look at the system with highest benefit-cost ratio where you are getting the most for your money, or the system that costs most but also brings the most benefit. System 1 has the highest B/C ratio, but System 3 has the highest system benefit even though its costs are also the highest. Mr. Cutler noted that these numbers are also likely to go up once the economic benefit analysis is complete for each corridor. He turned the floor over to Mr. Smith who continued with the summary of environmental findings, and final system rankings. He then provided a general summary of observations regarding truck lanes and the preliminary study recommendations, which include the construction of truck only lanes on I-75 North, I-85 North, I-75 South, I-20 West, and I-285. The first phase includes the construction of truck only lanes on I-75 North, I-285 West, and I-75 South.

Savannah Sub-Area

Claudia Bilotto, HNTB provided an overview of the Savannah Sub-Area analysis conducted as part of the truck lanes effort. She explained that explosive growth projections at the Port of Savannah, as well as growth in warehouse/distribution space and increased commuter traffic have all contributed to the need for improvements that address truck-related traffic in the area. Ms. Bilotto outlined the importance of coordinating with other ongoing efforts in the area and provided an overview of the proposed port connector road project that is undergoing further consideration by GDOT and the Georgia Ports Authority. Additionally, operational improvements that address truck specific movements in the area will be included in the final recommendations of the study.

Conclusions/Next Steps

Mr. Smith then concluded the presentation with a summary of emerging issues related to truck lane opportunities. He explained that truck only lanes make sense, but they also must compete with many other improvements for limited funding.

Questions and Comments

Mr. Vu asked about corridor impacts and the difference between benefit-cost ratios in the system and the segment analysis. Mr. Smith explained that this is both buffer related and as a result of induced mileage. He also asked about cost differences. Mr. Smith explained that the contracted termini accounts for lower system level costs on some segments. So if you add all of the individual segment costs together, the total is higher than the system level alternative cost.

Mr. VanMeter asked for clarification that the year of cost was 2007 dollars. Mr. Smith responded yes, and explained that we couldn't discount or inflate if we wished to have an apples-to-apples comparison. Currently there is no known opening year.

Mr. Vu asked how the Northwest Corridor project was accounted for – did the analysis include only the truck lanes or the entire project? Mr. Smith responded that we included the truck lanes costs only. We did not include the costs of HOT lanes or their benefits.

Ed Crowell, Georgia Motor Trucking Association (GMTA), clarified that these lanes were just compared to each other, so there's nothing to say that these are best corridors. Mr. Smith responded that these are compared to no build and based on segment performance to determine which performed the best. Mr. Crowell clarified that the truck lanes weren't compared with any other type of improvement, for example, commuter rail. Mr. Smith concurred and explained that the truck lane improvements were compared with the Mobility 2030 RTP as a base case.

Angela Alexander, GDOT Planning Administrator, commented that the data collected in this study on truck lanes will be very useful to apply in other studies when making investment decisions.

Mr. Vu asked if the environmental analysis applied only to the truck only lanes. Mr. Smith responded that yes, it is incremental based on the addition of truck only lanes, with the exception of the Northwest Corridor where there is an Environmental Impact Statement that includes additional managed lane improvements.

Mr. Crowell asked if the costs illustrated were above and beyond those included in the Atlanta Regional Commission's long range transportation plan. Mr. Smith responded that was correct, except for the Northwest Corridor which is already programmed in the RTP.

Chris Long, Department of Public Safety - Motor Carrier Compliance Division, asked if the Port Connector Road in Savannah was a truck only facility or open to mixed traffic. Ms. Bilotto responded that it is a mixed traffic facility.

Ralph Volpe, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), commented that FHWA has been tracking the truck lanes study at a national level and applauds GDOT for taking the lead, as truck lanes are on the national forefront. FHWA is also interested in parking and land use issues and in freight-oriented development.

Mr. Smith said that the meeting materials would be available via the project website in the next couple of weeks and that the study results would also be available via the project website after the first of the year. The meeting concluded at approximately 2:30PM.